

Department of Defense (DoD)
Civilian Personnel Management Service (CPMS)
Field Advisory Services - *FAS*
Classification Appeal Decision

DoD Decision:	Aircraft Worker, WG-8852-08
Initial classification:	Aircraft Worker, WG-8852-08
Organization:	Air Force Base Maintenance/Regeneration Center Receiving Branch
Date:	December 18, 1997

BACKGROUND

On October 29, 1997, Defense Civilian Personnel Management Service, Field Advisory Services Division accepted a classification appeal from , who is currently classified as an Aircraft Worker, WG-8852-08. The appellant requested that his job be reclassified to Aircraft Mechanic/Inspector, WG-8852-10.

SOURCES OF INFORMATION

- Information contained in appeal file submitted by servicing Civilian Personnel Office
- Additional information submitted by appellant (response to CPO comments)
- Telephone audit with appellant
- Telephone interview with appellant's first line supervisor
- Telephone interview with CPO classifier

POSITION INFORMATION

The appellant is currently classified as Aircraft Worker, WG-8852-08, located in the Aerospace Maintenance and Regeneration Center (AMARC). The AMARC is a processing and storage facility for DoD aircraft, and currently houses over 5000 aircraft of various types. Aircraft are processed for long term storage, reclamation of parts, or are maintained in a "flyable hold" status. The AMARC provides aircraft maintenance, overhaul, repair, preservation, storage and disposal services to all branches of the military, as well as the Coast Guard and NASA. Approximately 200-300 aircraft are

received annually, and almost the same number are prepared for "flyaway" (return to service). The appellant works in the Receiving Branch of the Process-in Division. The Branch is responsible for receiving incoming aircraft, inventorying the equipment, parts, and assemblies on the aircraft, and physically removing all classified equipment from the aircraft in preparation for storage. Depending on the size and configuration of the aircraft, this process may take anywhere from two hours to 36 hours.

The appellant receives assignments in the form of a work order, identifying the aircraft to be processed in, along with any special instructions or information specific to the particular aircraft. Working as part of a two-person crew, the appellant obtains all records and documents related to the aircraft, along with technical manuals and reference guides (if available) needed to identify, inventory and/or remove parts, equipment, and assemblies. In addition, the appellant obtains any necessary aircraft ground support equipment (AGE) and special tools to assist in the inventory process. The appellant then reviews the aircraft's records, including inventory lists, logs, and maintenance records to familiarize himself with the aircraft and its components.

INVENTORY

Prior to commencing the inventory, the appellant performs a standard safety inspection of the aircraft, to ensure that it is safe to work in and around. Upon completion of this check, the appellant carries out the inventory by verifying the existence of a wide variety of parts, assemblies, equipment, and other items against the inventory log maintained in the aircraft. The process involves matching parts numbers found on the items against the numbers recorded in the log. This requires the appellant to visually examine each item in order to match it with the logbook. Missing or unmatched items are documented as a "shortage" and appropriate paperwork is initiated by the appellant to notify the losing organization of the discrepancies.

Because of the physical makeup of the aircraft and the nature of the parts to be inventoried, the appellant is required to remove equipment and components in order to gain access to different areas of the aircraft. This involves the removal and/or disassembly of structural sheet metal, electronic panels and systems, canopies, hydraulic systems, doors, hatches, pylons, and weapons systems. Once the inventory is completed, the appellant reinstalls and replaces all equipment and parts to their original configuration, and secures the aircraft for the next phase of the processing-in

EQUIPMENT REMOVAL

Part of the aircraft receiving process is the removal of certain equipment from the aircraft, which is performed concurrently with the inventory. Such equipment includes classified equipment, pilferable items, and items with a shelf life. Of major import is the classified equipment, which includes navigation systems, avionics, communication systems, counter-measure radar, infrared devices, and other electronic components. In performing these duties, the appellant reviews technical manuals and reference guides

to determine location, appearance and function of the unit to be removed. Working from these technical instructions, the appellant gains access to the piece of equipment and removes it. This usually requires disconnecting electrical and electronic components, removing bolts, screws, and other hardware to disengage the equipment from the aircraft. Similar to the inventory process, the equipment removal often requires the appellant to remove and/or disassemble equipment or components simply to gain access to the classified equipment. Once the classified equipment is removed, the components are reassembled and reinstalled according to the technical manuals.

According to the appellant, classified equipment on incoming aircraft is not always easily identifiable. In some instances, the appellant must research technical data, review security classification guides and aircraft logs and files, and contact technical personnel from the losing organizations to determine which equipment is actually classified.

Upon removing the classified equipment, the appellant is responsible for safeguarding it until it is officially entered into the AMARC supply system. The equipment is condition inspected, tagged, and turned in to the appropriate supply facility for storage.

REINSTALLATION FOR FLYAWAY

When aircraft are prepared for return to service, the appellant is responsible for obtaining the inventory records for the aircraft, retrieving all classified and other removed equipment, and reinstalling them in the aircraft. Upon reinstalling the equipment, the appellant updates and certifies the appropriate inventory records.

INCIDENTAL REPAIRS

At times during an inventory/equipment removal project, the appellant may be required to perform incidental repairs of aircraft components. This generally occurs when the appellant is removing or reinstalling equipment, and finds that a system or component is not functioning properly, or finds a damaged part. For example, if the appellant needs to operate a hydraulic system for the purpose of gaining access to an aircraft component, and finds that the system malfunctions, he will troubleshoot the problem according to the technical manual and attempt to fix the problem, if practical. However, if the problem requires a particular specialty (sheet metal, machinist, electrician), the appellant refers the problem to one of the shops. In most instances, the appellant will make repairs to the extent necessary to gain access to equipment, and to secure the aircraft (broken doors, hatches, etc.).

REFERENCE GUIDES

The appellant is also responsible for developing written "reference guides" for use by the branch. These guides are developed for all aircraft models that are processed-in, and contain information regarding their parts, assemblies, components, and equipment; specifically location, appearance, removal instructions, and any special information

needed to process-in a particular type of aircraft. These guides are constantly updated and maintained by the appellant and his co-workers.

STANDARD(S) REFERENCED

- U.S. Office of Personnel Management Job Grading Standard for Aircraft Mechanic, WG-8852
- U.S. Office of Personnel Management Job Grading Standard for Materials Examiner and Identifier, WG-6912
- U.S. Office of Personnel Management Job Grading Standard for Sheetmetal Mechanic, WG-3806
- U.S. Office of Personnel Management Position Classification Standard for Equipment Specialist, GS-1670
- U.S. Office of Personnel Management Job Grading Standard for Inspectors

SERIES AND TITLE DETERMINATION

Although the appellant does not contest the series allocation of his job, he asserts that his job is a "multi-skilled" position, requiring a variety of skills and knowledge. In fact, the job responsibilities cover two distinct functions: (1) inventory and (2) equipment removal and reinstallation. Therefore, a thorough analysis of the series determination is warranted in this case.

The duties performed by the appellant cover two distinct work functions (materials inventory and aircraft equipment removal/installation), requiring separate bodies of knowledge and skills. In performing the physical inventory of the aircraft during the processing-in, the appellant employs skills and knowledge typical of the WG-6912, Materials Examiner and Identifier series, which includes work "involved in the identification, examination, classification, acceptance, and disposition of materials and equipment." Workers in this occupation "are familiar with a wide range of materials and equipment as well as numerous procedures, supply catalogs, technical manuals, and equipment drawings required for product and equipment verification." Materials Examiners are generally found in warehousing operations, including shipping and receiving branches at property reutilization and disposal facilities. While the AMARC facility is a unique operation within DoD, the work performed by the appellant is covered by this series.

The other distinct work function performed by the appellant is the removal and reinstallation of a variety of classified components, parts and equipment from the aircraft. While this work may be viewed as related to the overall inventory function of the organization, it must be considered separately, as it requires a distinctly different body of skills and knowledge. Specifically, the appellant must have knowledge and skill in the make-up, configuration, functions, and technical characteristics of aircraft components, assemblies, parts, and equipment. This knowledge is employed for purposes that go well beyond the simple identification and examination covered by the

WG-6912 series. The appellant must be skilled in techniques of removing, installing and replacing these components and equipment, using a variety of mechanics tools and accessories. For example, the appellant routinely has to remove and disassemble large portions of the aircraft for purposes of gaining access and/or removing certain equipment. Furthermore, the appellant reinstalls and replaces components and parts, which were removed. This requires knowledge of the various components, parts, and equipment found on a wide variety of aircraft, how they work and how they are installed. In addition, the appellant must exercise skill and ability in the proper techniques and methods for removal and installation of this equipment, working from a variety of technical manuals, using a variety of tools. This work is covered by the WG-8852 occupational series, which applies to jobs "involved in the maintenance and repair of fixed and rotary wing aircraft systems, airframes, components, and assemblies." While the primary purpose of the appealed job is to inventory aircraft received by AMARC, it is essential that the incumbent has the mechanical skills and knowledge found in the Aircraft Mechanic occupation.

In his appeal, the appellant describes his job as "multi-skilled not limited to Aircraft Mechanic, Sheetmetal Technician, Inspector, Equipment Specialist, (and) Materials Examiner and Identifier." It is clear that the duties performed are typical of both the Aircraft Mechanic occupation and the Materials Examiner/Identifier occupations, however, the work is not characteristic of the Sheetmetal Mechanic, Inspector or Equipment Specialist occupations. Any work performed involving sheetmetal is incidental to the removal, replacement, or installation of aircraft parts, assemblies, or equipment, which is appropriately covered by the WG-8852 occupational series. The

GS-1670 Equipment Specialist Series covers work that requires "an intensive, practical knowledge of equipment and its characteristics, properties, and uses in order to (1) collect, analyze, interpret, and provide specialized information about equipment together with related advice to those who design, test, produce, procure, supply, operate, repair, or dispose of equipment; (2) identify and recommend practical solutions to engineering design and manufacturing defects and recommend use of substitute testing or support equipment when the equipment requested is unavailable; or (3) develop, install, inspect, or revise equipment maintenance programs and techniques." The appellant does not perform any of the aforementioned work functions, nor do his duties and responsibilities require the kind of equipment knowledge found in GS-1670 positions.

Discussion of "Inspector" Duties

In his appeal, the appellant requests that his job be classified as an Aircraft Mechanic/Inspector. Coverage under the Job Grading Standard for Inspectors (for grading and titling purposes) is limited to jobs "that involve examining services, materials, and products that are processed, manufactured, or repaired by workers performing trade or craft work to determine that the physical and operating characteristics are within acceptable standards, specifications, or contractual

requirements." The appellant does not perform any work that meets the definition of "inspector" in this standard. The duties performed by the incumbent include performing a visual "condition inspection" of materials and equipment inventoried and/or removed; performing a brief safety inspection for the purpose of determining that the aircraft is safe to work in; and "inspecting" the aircraft for the purpose of locating and inventorying items on the aircraft. While these practices may fall under the general definition of "inspection," they do not meet the specific definition for coverage under the JGS for Inspectors. The appellant does not inspect materials, equipment, or services, which were processed, manufactured or repaired by others. The appellant argues that verifying the inventory logs of the aircraft (in which there are often discrepancies) constitutes inspecting the work performed by previous workers who have certified those records. Again, while this may be a type of "inspection" under the general definition of the word, it does not constitute inspection work covered by the standard.

For purposes of the series determination, the combination of the two types of work constitutes a "mixed" job, which, according to established classification principles, defined in OPM's Job Grading System for Trades and Labor Occupations, is ordinarily coded to the series "having the highest skill and knowledge requirements." In evaluating the grade levels of both types of work, it was determined that the WG-8852 duties (removal, reinstallation of aircraft components and equipment) constituted the higher graded work, and is therefore the appropriate series for this job.

The JGS for Aircraft Mechanic authorizes two titles for jobs in this series. Jobs classified at the WG-10 and above are titled Aircraft Mechanic. Those classified below the WG-10 level are titled Aircraft Worker. As the subsequent evaluation will show, the job warrants a grade WG-8, and is therefore titled **Aircraft Worker, WG-8852**.

GRADE DETERMINATION

In order to determine the grade level of a mixed job, the different types of work must be isolated, and graded separately. Therefore, the grade level discussion will include an evaluation of the appellant's work using the criteria in the JGS for Aircraft Mechanic and the JGS for Materials Examiner and Identifier. Both standards use four factors to evaluate the grade level: *Skill and Knowledge, Responsibility, Physical Effort, and Working Conditions*.

Skill and Knowledge

WG-6912: The appellant's job requires skill and knowledge in the identification and examination of a wide variety of aircraft equipment, components and parts, for the purpose of accomplishing detailed inventories, and identifying and removing classified or other special equipment or materials from incoming aircraft. This work often requires intense research of equipment and technical manuals, security classification guides, and computerized files and logs to determine the nature and classification of certain equipment. Such skill and knowledge is comparable to the WG-7 level, as described in

the JGS for WG-6912, at which examiners "must have a thorough knowledge of the techniques and equipment used in the examination and classification of standard, unusual, and highly specialized items." At this level, examiners "conduct comprehensive searches of manufacturers catalogs, tech orders, schematics, and computerized data, to identify unique and specialized items or those which lack proper identification or documentation." This factor is evaluated at the grade 7 level, under the WG-6912 standard.

WG-8852: In order to gain access to, remove, and reinstall various parts, equipment and components in the aircraft, the appellant employs skill and knowledge comparable to the WG-8 Aircraft Worker, who "must have a knowledge of where and how a variety of parts, accessories, and components, such as couplings, spark plug cables, seat tracks, and accumulators, are installed." At this grade level, workers make repairs by "removing, cleaning, reinstalling, or replacing defective parts, accessories and components." While it is recognized that the appellant is not directly involved in repair or maintenance operations, he nevertheless must exercise comparable skill and knowledge to remove and reinstall a wide variety of components and equipment. In contrast, the WG-10 mechanic makes repairs "to a variety of systems, assemblies, and surfaces such as hydraulic, oil, fuel, and pressurization systems, landing gear assemblies, ailerons, and flaps." At that level, the mechanic must "have a greater knowledge of how the various systems, assemblies, and surfaces fit and work together, knowledge of a wide variety of test procedures, and skill in tracing hard-to-locate defects or problems." The appellant does remove and reinstall systems and equipment mentioned at the WG-10 level in the standard, but is not required to have the level of skill to troubleshoot, find hard-to-locate defects, or make determinations about the type and extent of repair necessary for systems, assemblies and components. This factor is evaluated at the WG-8 level.

Responsibility

WG-6912: The appellant is assigned projects by the supervisor or work leader in the form of a work order that describes generally what is to be done. The appellant is expected to plan and carry out routine projects with minimal supervision, with only occasional spot checks by the supervisor. In general, the appellant attempts to resolve problems independently, but discusses unusual or controversial matters with the supervisor prior to taking action. In the materials examining portion of the job, the appellant is expected to independently research missing or unidentified items, using a variety of methods in doing so, and is afforded wide latitude in making judgments regarding the identification and classification of equipment. This level of independence is comparable to the WG-7 level described in the standard.

WG-8852: According to the standard, upon receiving oral or written work orders, the WG-8 Aircraft Worker independently "selects tools, decides on methods and techniques to use, and carries out assignments with little check during their progress. He obtains standard parts, such as fuel and oil line connections and fittings, cable

linkages, and spark plug cables and harnesses, by looking up replacement information in parts manuals and by making comparisons with samples." The appellant's work responsibilities easily meet this grade level in the standard, and in certain elements, appear to exceed it. The appellant routinely completes the removal and reinstallation of equipment and components independently, with little or no supervision. He works from technical manuals, which are sometimes inadequate, to complete the assignments. At times, he may be required to deviate or improvise when technical guidance is lacking. This usually precipitates the establishment or revision of the written reference guides maintained by the branch. While this level of independence exceeds the WG-8 description in the standard, it does not fully meet the intent of the WG-10 level for this factor. At that level, a mechanic "determines the type and extent of repair needed, and completes repairs with little or no check during their progress or upon completion." Again, this level of independence is coupled with, and a function of, assignments of greater complexity, such as locating hard-to-find defects and determining the nature and extent of repairs needed on a variety of components, assemblies and systems. Although there are similarities between the degree of independence exercised by the appellant and that which is described at the WG-10 level, the nature, scope, and complexity of the appellant's work are not comparable to that level, and cannot be credited. Therefore, this factor is evaluated at the WG-8 level.

Physical Effort

The appellant is required to perform the duties in uncomfortable positions, often standing, stooping, reaching, climbing, bending, and lifting objects up to 50 lbs. This is typical of all grade levels in both job grading standard.

Working Conditions

The appellant works inside and outside, and is exposed to seasonal desert weather changes, dust, toxic fumes, dirt, grease, loud noise, and chemicals. The appellant is subject to hazards associated with working on aircraft, including broken bones, burns, cuts, and electrical shock. This is typical of both the WG-8 and WG-10 levels in the 8852 standard.

DECISION

According to established job grading principles, the series and grade of a mixed job driven by the highest level of work performed. In this case, an evaluation of all of the work performed by the appellant resulted in a mixed grade: WG-7 Materials Examiner and Identifier, and WG-8 Aircraft Worker. In accordance with appropriate classification principles, the job is properly classified as **Aircraft Worker, WG-8852-08**.